798 eventual frictions have been lessened and in our century they have disappeared so that, today, the defence against the onrush of materialistic propaganda is carried on by a virtually united religious front. Never, since the Crusades and the anti-Turkish wars, have the Magyars been so conscious of the conflict of the "righteous" and "godless" as today.

659 563 Between the two world wars, only the Christian churches enjoyed co-operation on the part of the State, while persons of Jewish faith were submitted to social and economic pressures. During the last years of World War II, this developed into a brutal persecution and deportation along the Nazi pattern.

659 871 After 1945, a separation of Church and State took place and, when the Communists took over the government, open hostilities broke out between them. Prior to that, 5,000 elementary and 120 high schools were denominational, mostly Catholic. These schools, along with all Church property were confiscated and entrusted to a "State Office for Church Affairs," decidedly hostile to any [661] kind of religion. Religious orders were disbanded and all but two of the 400 existing religious periodicals suppressed. Several hundred priests and pastors were deported and leaders of the churches (Primat Mindszenty, Archbishop Grösz, both Catholics, and Lutheran Bishop Ordas) were tried and condemned.

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Although extracurricular classes in religion are now permitted, the local Communist authorities not only wage intensive anti-religious and anti-Church propaganda against them, but they also try to use every means of coercion to keep parents from sending their children to these classes.

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Since the 1948-49 wave of persecution, ecclesiastical authorities have been forced to compromise; they have agreed to sign acts of loyalty and to tolerate the government sponsored "peace-priest" movement. Nevertheless, in the rural areas, resistance to Communism is still centered around the local church. In spite of the official attitude, there are no signs yet to indicate a relaxation of the devotion or the stubborn adherence to the church of the traditionally pious Magyar peasants -- men and women alike.

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Among the peasantry, the teaching of the basic tenets of religion to the child has been traditionally the mother's duty, and the growing child can observe, at home, the example of his elders. Meals, important activities and everyday labor are always introduced and followed by a short prayer. At the table, the sign of the cross accompanies the cutting of the fresh loaf of bread. When church bells ring, the women cross themselves and men remove their hats. The Catholic home always displays religious pictures and a font; Protestants ornament the main living room with the family Bible.

nowadays, are often prohibited by the local Communist authorities or simply limited to the square around the church or even to the interior of the church. 795 [796]

The Protestants, besides worshipping on Sunday in their church, often gather in their homes in the evenings and read the Bible, sing hymns, and tell pious stories. [771] Hungarian folklore is rich in legends and tales of which a common subject are the wanderings of Christ among the peoples in the company of Saint Peter. [538]

The celebration of the Catholic parish feast is an occasion for joyous festivities in which the non-Catholic inhabitants also take part. [796]

Intermarriages between Catholics and Protestants are frequent in spite of the restrictions imposed by the Catholic Church which require a reverzális, a document in which the non-Catholic party agrees that children issuing from the marriage shall be brought up in the Catholic faith. [585]

Although there are no permanent sects in Hungary that preach healing by faith, men and women who claim to have charismatic virtue and to heal through laying on of hands and prayer arise occasionally among the peasants and acquire a local and short-lived renown. They are called javasember or javasasszony. 756

With the 1945 land reform and later decrees, the Catholic Church has lost its large estates and even the land owned by local parishes were partly 659 793

659 793 distributed. The State, in return, pays a small amount (kongrua) toward the support of the clergy, the payment of which is conditioned by the individual priest's signing the oath of loyalty to the regime. The bulk of the income of the parish priest (plébános) must therefore come from the parish, who willingly support their priest in spite of their own financial problems. This economic dependency of the plébános upon the members of his church has not caused the loss of his disputed but so far unshaken prestige among his flock or even among the entire population of the village.

[795] As for the organization of the churches, the Catholic hierarchy is headed by the Primat of Esztergom who presides over the Bench of Bishops comprising three archbishops and fourteen bishops. The highest authorities of the Protestant churches are the synods held periodically; their highest administrative body is the konvent. There are four general districts, subdivided into counties which conform to the territorial units of the state administration.

771 665 The still powerful impact of the Church upon public life was demonstrated in recent years by the returns of the 1947 elections in Hungary. The completely inexperienced and unorganised Demokrata Néppárt, which had

9: Eppstein S-4 (no date) 1945 EC1 Hungary EC1

verted by the Western Church nearly 1000 years ago, and ever after considered herself as standing under the special protection of Rome.

This tradition is still alive, even in politics. The Holy See concedes to the King of Hungary, who bears the title of Apostolic King, special rights which it claims for itself in other countries, and has exercised its influence in favour of Hungary on many occasions. In return, the Catholic Church enjoyed a specially privileged position in Hungary up to modern times; and, although all the chief Confessions are to-day nominally equal, the Catholic Church is recognized as the senior among them. There are three Roman Catholic Archbishops of Hungary—the Archbishops of Esztergom, Kalocsa and Eger. The first-named, who is in fact always made a Cardinal, is the head of the Roman Church, and one of the most important figures in the country, particularly when, like the present Benedictine Archbishop, Cardinal Seredi, he is a commanding personality.

The Hungarian Succession Law provides that the King of Hungary, as wearer of the Holy Crown, must always be a Catholic. The chief national festival is St Stephen's Day (20 August), and the most venerated of all the national relics is the Holy Crown. Next to it comes the Sacred Right Hand of St Stephen, which was found preserved, in a mummified condition, about a century after the Saint's death, and is carried in procession every St Stephen's Day through Budapest with a dazzling array of gold-broidered vestments, uniforms and traditional costumes.

The Church is one of the largest landowners and

9: Eppstein S-4 (no date) 1945 EC1 Hungary EC1

The Church is one of the largest landowners and 795
one of the richest institutions generally in Hun- 659
gary. Besides the Archbishops and the Bishoprics, many of the monasteries have received vast endowments from kings and other pious persons. The leading order is the Benedictine, whose chief house at Pannonhalma, in West Hungary, is an 'Arch-Abbey', not subject to the jurisdiction of any bishop. The Cistercians, Franciscans and Piarists also possess many monasteries. All education in 871
Hungary was in the hands of the Church up to 794
modern times, and these four Orders still conduct a large number of secondary schools. A considerable proportion of the primary schools are also 'confessional', that is, parochial schools.

There is a rather wide gap between the higher 793
and the lower Catholic clergy. The village priests are relatively poorly paid and have to live modestly. Nevertheless, they enjoy much esteem, and rightly, for they are a devoted and well-educated body of men.

THE PROTESTANTS. Considering the position held 795
by the Roman Catholic religion, it may seem strange that the confession which is commonly regarded as the most 'national', and which is nicknamed the 'Magyar faith', should be not the Catholic, but, on the contrary, the Calvinist. In the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries nearly the whole country was converted to Protestantism, the German colonists and a few others adopting the Lutheran confession, while most of the Magyars followed the doctrines of Calvin.

In the seventeenth century West Hungary, which was then under the direct rule of the Habs-

14: Evans S-3 (1950) 1953 EC1 Hungary EC1

HUNGARY'S CHURCHES TODAY

798 Of all the wild talk that has been bruited about to confuse the minds of the people of this country on the passage of events in the countries of Eastern Europe, none has been more wild than the picture of the coming to Hungary of an order of affairs in which the clock has been put back for the churches and instead of the freedom they previously enjoyed they are now being subjected to "religious persecution."

The truth is that, whereas there has been no age in which the flame of freedom has not burned in the breasts of the Hungarian people, there has also been, till now, no age in Hungary in which liberty has not been attacked and its defenders repressed. This is as true of ideas and defenders of religious freedom as it is true of ideas and defenders of freedom in general, and when the present situation is looked at in the light of the past the manifest advances it reflects can be clearly seen.

Conversion to Catholicism

795 Christianity came to Hungary in the tenth century, but it was during the reign of the first King of Hungary, Stephen (997-1038) later known as St. Stephen, that it was firmly planted in the country, partly by the rough arm of the civil power, with the result that on the death of Stephen there was a strong reversion to paganism. The first missionaries to Hungary had come from the Orthodox East, but a number of factors, particularly perhaps Stephen's alliance, through marriage, with the German Empire, led the country into the Western, Catholic, camp.

It is not possible in a brief pamphlet such as this to review the turbulent course of Hungarian history and the many setbacks the growth of Christianity received, chief among which were the Turkish invasions.

[659] It flourished and grew despite them all and grew in a fundamental alliance with the State, the bishops, although at first foreigners, being nominated by the crown and never being averse to calling in the aid of the civil power to suppress the heresies that seemed perpetually to arise; the Cathari* in the twelfth century and the Waldenses† after them preparing the ground for the later Reformation. It was to deal with this situation that in 1228 the bishops called for the establishment of the Inquisition in Hungary, but it cannot be said ever to have gained a firm footing.

* A heresy which flourished in Northern Italy. It held that matter was evil.

† A movement originated by Peter Waldo of Lyons. It was anti-clerical and advocated apostolical simplicity.

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The Churches and Fascism

On the Catholic side there was the long tradition of power, privilege and wealth, but together with it many of the monks and lower clergy made considerable contributions to Hungarian education. Such national feelings as there were among the lower clergy were, however, completely overwhelmed by a hierarchy which stood for union with Austria and for the House of Hapsburg. This important tendency was rightly noticed in a publication issued by the Foreign Office to its staff during the war, and now available in the British Museum, which stated that " the Roman Catholic Church tends to legitimism."‖

The wartime record of the Hungarian churches was a mixed one. The Horthy dictatorship, which was a part of the Rome-Berlin Axis, had found a willing ally in the Catholic Church. The Church acted as one of its chief spokesmen, particularly among the poor of the villages. Subservience to the existing state of things (large feudal estates and millions* of landless beggars) and bloodcurdling tales of the Red Bogy had been preached from the pulpits on behalf of a narrow ruling class and its foreign friends.

Generally speaking, the attitude of the Catholic hierarchy was that of the ruling class, prepared to co-operate with Hitler to the degree to which Hungary might gain from the process but expressing dissatisfaction when the process was reversed, and the result was that certain voices were raised within the Catholic Church expressing dissatisfaction with the racial laws and, after 1943, talking of Hungary's " craving for peace."

It was for reasons of this kind that eventually some of the Church leaders, Catholic and Protestant, were put under restraint by the Germans although they never at any time made any protest against Hungary's part in the war against the U.S.S.R.; indeed, Catholic newspapers criticised Great Britain for making an alliance with " atheists." Some of the Protestant opposition was, however, more far reaching and it was during the war that the influence of the anti-Nazi Karl Barth grew by leaps and bounds, and not a few of the Protestant ministers opposed strongly the deportation of the Jews.

When, eventually, the Soviet Army liberated the country the Ecumenical Press Service (December, 1944) reported:—

" At Cluj a delegation of Russian officers paid a visit to János Vásárhelyi, Calvinist Bishop, informing him that he could continue to officiate unhindered. Simultaneously the Moscow Radio broadcast an appeal to the Roman Catholic priests and Protestant pastors in Hungary to continue their work. Fleeing from the country the Germans took away everything movable and burned historic buildings. At Kecskemét two colleges were

‖ The idea of restoring the Hapsburgs.

* This sounds exaggerated but it is true. There were 3,000,000 landless peasants.

727 destroyed, while Debrecen, bulwark of Hungarian Calvinism,
659 lay in ruins, including the famous Great Church. The 700-years-old Calvinist College remained intact and the Provisional National Assembly held its first meeting within its walls. We
[563] learned that the Jews were last put to work on fortifications at Budapest and Vienna. A strong protest was made to Regent Horthy against the inhuman deportations. Under ecclesiastical pressure these were discontinued after July 1, but they were resumed under Szálasi, who ordered not only Jews but everyone unfriendly to Hitlerism to be deported. Szálasi and the Gestapo began proceedings against all Calvinist priests who raised their voices on behalf of the persecuted Jews. The 400-years-old College of Sárospatak succeeded in preserving the Jews' wealth, school-books and ecclesiastical robes."

[668] Nevertheless, from the end of 1942, when a united front against Horthy had been formed which opposed the war against the Soviet Union, it had included Catholic laity if not clergy, and Protestants, and when the first National Assembly met again in the Calvinist College in Debrecen in 1944 the Provisional Government had extremely strong Protestant backing, particularly from the Calvinists, who provided one of the Vice-Presidents of the Assembly.

Liberation and After

After the Liberation the church situation in Hungary rapidly crystallised. To understand it, three points need to be noted:

659 The first is the attitude of the Government, which is effectively summed up in the Constitution adopted by the National
[641] Assembly on August 18, 1949, Article 54 of which states:—

1. "The Hungarian People's Republic guarantees the freedom of conscience of the citizens and the right to exercise their religion freely."

2. "In order to be able to assure freedom of conscience the Hungarian People's Republic separates Church from State."

To this might be added an extract from a speech made by the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Rákosi, on April 25, 1948, at the time of the controversy on the nationalisation of schools:—

"I must speak of one of the unsolved problems of democracy, that of relations between democracy and the Church. As everybody knows, Hungarian democracy stands for the most complete freedom of religion. Communists especially have voiced this since the first moment of the Liberation; and, of course, we have not only voiced it but have also lived up to it. Even to-day we do not think otherwise. In this connection allow me to mention one fact. For May 1 we shall provide bronze for casting church bells for 778 parishes. In so doing the Government is fulfilling a promise made for the centenary* year.

* Centenary of the 1848 revolution, which sought to obtain Hungary's independence from Austria.

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659 The bronze could so easily have been used for other purposes, but to prove that we are helping the Church, not only by words but by deeds also, we allotted this bronze to the churches."

Mr. Rákosi could have said much more than this: he could have pointed to the fact that all the churches were very largely financed by the Government, to the Government financing of church schools, to the time allowed to all the churches on the wireless and to the money, labour and raw materials provided for a most extensive campaign of church reconstruction.

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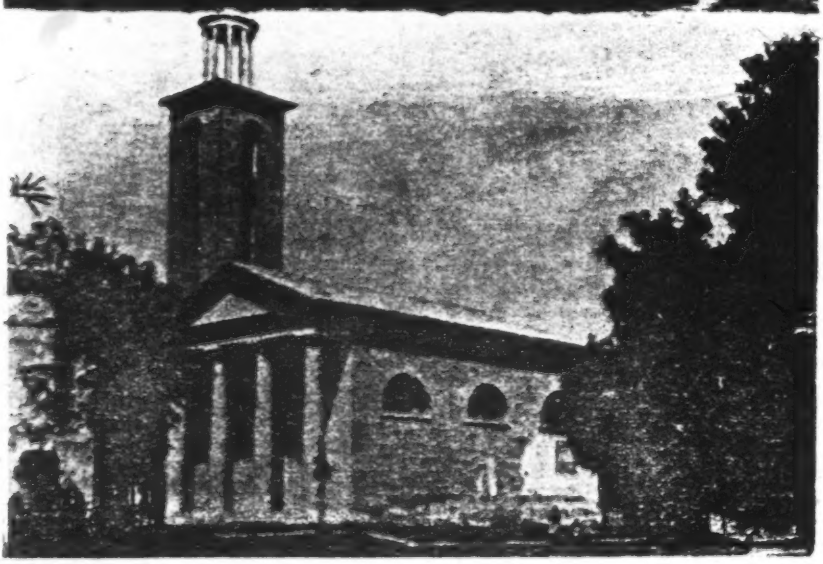

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Mindszenty

Shortly after this frank declaration the Prince Primate of Esztergom, Cardinal Serédi, died and was replaced by a legitimist of long standing, József Mindszenty, who shortly afterwards was also made a Cardinal. This event itself was used to show the way in which, in future, Hungarian Church news was to be treated internationally, the Vatican issuing a statement to the effect that Mindszenty *might* not be allowed to go to Rome to take his cardinalate, and the Press in the western countries stating that he *had* not been allowed to go to Rome. He did, of course, go and, as later events proved, used the opportunity, through the agency of Cardinal Van Roey, of Belgium, to get in touch with Otto von Hapsburg.

From this moment on the new Cardinal endeavoured to mobilise the Church against the new Hungary, and his aims in doing so were made abundantly clear during his subsequent trial. He condemned every action taken by the People's Government and, in his pastoral letters, called on his followers to do likewise. His first pastoral letter was an open attack on the Hungarian Government and an open alliance with another country. "We feel bound," he said, "to say openly that a Christian citizen cannot possibly vote for a programme which advocates a new oppression, a new terror regime and the abolition of Natural Law. We regret that we have to agree entirely with the statement of the British Foreign Secretary that it seemed that in Hungary one totalitarian dictatorship was merely being replaced by another one."

The Cardinal's freedom to publish this sort of thing is the only answer it needs. But this was by no means all. He attacked the Government for assisting the occupying Power (the U.S.S.R.); he said that the "present merely temporary Government of Hungary has by far overstepped its power and competence" (this for allowing divorce); he attacked the agrarian reform, which he said was based "on a hateful spirit of vengeance"; and he tried to undermine confidence in the Government by saying: "It is true the expropriated landowners are promised some compensation but this pledge is not likely to materialise." He finished with the wild conclusion: "Do not be intimidated by the threats of those Sons of Evil," and added:

"The less opposition they meet the greater is the growth of compulsion and violence. It is in the nature of such a compulsory system, too, that it loosens the bond of marriage and lets Youth decay to-day. The next day it ensures that this libertinism is established for good and the day after men will have lost any sense of chivalry and honesty and, like wild beasts, will assault defenceless women to satisfy their passions."

794 It is not possible to draw any conclusion from this first
659 pastoral other than that its wild and irresponsible author did not propose to allow the Hungarian Government to live at peace with him and was prepared to wreck the Catholic Church if need be, while he vented his personal political hatred of the new social system of the country.

The Cardinal maintained his initial form and lost no opportunity to attack the Government. When the Allies signed the Peace Treaty with Hungary, he led the bishops in an attack on the Treaty (" the Treaty overloads our country with burdens and must be considered unfair and even unjust "); rejecting
871 especially the cession of Transylvania to Rumania. He again attacked when it was proposed that the fantastic system of compulsory religious instruction in schools (which compelled, *e.g.*, Marxist parents to decide whether their children should be brought up as Catholics, Calvinists or Lutherans) should be brought to an end. When elections came in 1947, the Catholics were warned that they could not vote for socialists of any kind, and immediately afterwards the Cardinal opposed the expulsion of Germans, largely on the grounds that they were Catholics, and in a pastoral at the end of the year he forbade Catholic teachers and parents to accept the use of new school textbooks teaching evolution and spoke of the circulation in schools of " pamphlets propagating masturbation." It is perhaps unnecessary to add that these pamphlets had no existence. One of the saddest features of the whole Mindszenty affair is the way in which the Archbishop's mind was so obviously preoccupied with questions of sex.

659 All these attacks, however, were mild compared with the
871 attack he led against the Government when it introduced into
794 the Assembly a motion for the nationalisation of schools. Such a motion was bound to be produced at some stage, just as it had been years before in other countries. In most Western States the schools and education have long since been considered to be the business of the State, but in Hungary, before 1945, there was a total of 4,564 denominational schools in which 650,000 children were taught: 2,797 of these schools were owned and controlled by the Catholic Church. As late as 1947 out of 2,908 elementary schools only 934 were not controlled by churches. This state of affairs was not only tolerated but approved by the Horthy regime because it was in line with its policy of keeping the educational standards of the peasants and workers as low as possible, in order to have available a supply of cheap labour.

A situation now arose when the people's Government was already paying for the schools and could hardly tolerate that it should pay for schools in which the Cardinal forbade modern scientific education, and instead used the schools for

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propaganda against the Government. All Catholics who supported the nationalisation were threatened with excommunication in a pastoral letter of May 17, 1948; but by this threat the Cardinal forced a development of the situation which bore fruit at a later stage in that he compelled the latent Catholic opposition to his own policy to come into the open and conferences of Catholic teachers were called to oppose the policy of the Cardinal.

Since it was the proposal to nationalise the schools that compelled all the churches to define their attitudes, it is right at this juncture to go back and consider the third factor in the situation, the attitude of the Protestants.

Bishop Bereczky

The man who was destined to become the leader of Hungarian Calvinism (the Reformed Church) at this period was Albert Bereczky, and it is important that his attitude should be understood. He himself states it quite clearly in his contribution to *Five Years of Hungarian Protestantism*, 1945-1950:

"A terrible anxiety was growing in me, beginning with the thirties, that we were living in an awful deception which would lead to catastrophic consequences. The outbreak of the war realised my forebodings. I was sure that Nazism, after an unforeseeable course of disasters, would lose, and, in my sleepless nights, I saw the opening of an abyss which would engulf the whole nation and the church which had become like the salt which had lost its savour. Those who did not feel this anguish—yet how little it was to feel only this—will never understand what liberation meant. To put it bluntly: for those who found no fault with the years before or even during the war, nothing else happened but defeat, disaster and judgment. There were many such people, even among believing Christians. Why, it was possible to lead, individually, a good Christian life, to maintain one's fellowship with Jesus Christ, and even more, it was possible to gather these pious individuals into pious groups and to be, at the same time, completely oblivious to the fact that lots of money could be made by owning tenement houses in the Párkány Street, in which small rooms served as 'houses' to 14-15 members of three-four families, in an environment of such physical, mental and spiritual destitution that it would have taken the coarsest hypocrisy to demand of these people that they be 'Christians.' And there were many Párkány Streets in those days!

"There were hundreds of thousands of rural proletarians on the Great Plain whose staple food throughout the winter was but beetroot that is only fit to be fed to the cattle. Yet how many a time did the account of their poverty fall on deaf ears? It was my great sin that, while seeing all this, I was content to dole out that charity that we were able to give and to administer drops of

659 ointment instead of exposing my mind to the full impact of what
794 I knew to be true; this society, with a large part of its peasants reduced to beggary, with its workers trying to break the chains of poverty, with its empty-headed and frivolous middle class and conceited politicians, was doomed.

" The outbreak of the war made me realise, with benumbing clearness, that the disaster would not be avoided. And yet there was a church in the midst of this nation, with a wonderful past, an unworthy heir of the Reformation, a church that had no eyes to see and no ears to hear, a church that was passively withdrawing, even in her best members, from that inevitable social transformation that was irresistibly drawing near through the debacle of war. The large majority of the church members had an aversion even to thoroughgoing individual piety—yet how far a cry this was from Christians identifying themselves in humble repentance with that people to which they belonged.

" My forebodings of utter annihilation were made complete by that awful symbol which seemed to take shape in the organised persecution of the Jews. . . . As a matter of fact it was this organised persecution which first awakened in the Church the consciousness of corporate responsibility. Yet how slow and reluctant was this awakening! . . . May I add now that this fight was constantly confused and hampered by that bad conscience which our Church leaders had, owing to their blindness as to social problems in previous decades. . . .

" Yet the inexorable trend of events shattered all our efforts. It was quite late, in the first months of 1944, that I realised that the fight must be carried on for the survival of the entire Hungarian nation, and the Church must directly enter the ranks of that underground resistance which had come into being during this time of cruel persecution."

Consecration of Bishop Bereczky.

It was the man who thought like this that emerged as the outstanding leader of the Reformed Church after the war and who became Bishop of Budapest. He was ably seconded by János Péter, later elected to the largest Reformed See, that of Debrecen. When, therefore, the question of school nationalisation was raised the leadership of the Hungarian Reformed Church decided that this was not one of " faith " and not one on which a fundamental dispute between Church and State would be right. It was, therefore, prepared to compromise and the resulting Church-State agreement is sufficiently important to be given in full. It was signed on October 7, 1948.

The Agreement

The Government of the Hungarian Republic and the delegated Committee of the Synodal Council of the Hungarian Reformed Church, in order to arrive at a peaceful and correct settlement of the questions which affect the relations between the State and the Church, have made the following agreement:—

1. With the view of a new regulation of the Church position in the Hungarian Republic, the Government of the Hungarian Republic and the Hungarian Reformed Church will appoint a permanent Joint Commission to present, for enactment, a draft of new laws affecting religious matters, particularly those concerning the religion of children. The necessary modifications in church policy, according to the new national Act concerning religious matters, will be enacted by the legislation of the Church.

2. The Government of the Hungarian Republic declares in this instance also that the Legislation and Government of the Hungarian Republic has ensured, defended and, by Act 33 of 1947, significantly enlarged the free exercise of religion and, by contributing to the personal and real expenditure of the Church, has rendered possible the maintenance of the present framework of the Church's life.

3. The Government of the Hungarian Republic regards the following activities, according to existing legal relations, as pertaining to the free function of church life; the holding of divine services in church buildings or in other suitable public buildings, in homes and in open spaces, the holding of Bible classes in church buildings, in schools, in private homes, in church halls; the colportage of Bibles and tractates; the holding of congregational or national church conferences, evangelistic meetings, the compulsory religious instruction in public schools and the charitable work of the church. To this end it permits the free use of class rooms and other suitable premises of public schools, wherever this may be necessary, outside regular school hours, subject to agreement with the

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[194] school authority and with the obligation of paying for any damage which may occur owing to the Church's use of these premises for divine services, Sunday schools, Bible classes, choir meetings and other religious church meetings and gatherings, until such times as the congregations are able to acquire their own buildings for these purposes.

The Government of the Hungarian Republic furthermore regards the autonomous exercise of church jurisdiction as pertaining to the free function of church life, within the limits and in the manner in which this activity is regulated by the church laws approved by the Head of the State for the time being.

4. The Government of the Hungarian Republic takes cognisance of and honours that obligation of the Hungarian Reformed Church which, according to the command of Christ and her Confessions, pledges her to exhort the believers to charity and especially to the care of the poor, the lonely, orphans and the aged. It therefore secures the right to the maintenance and development of charitable institutions and the collection of charitable offerings, within the bounds of existing legal regulations.

5. The Government of the Hungarian Republic takes cognisance of the expressed intention of the Reformed Church to realise the principle of "a Free Church in a Free State."

During the time of the transition, in the course of which the Reformed Church will develop her material resources, the Government of the Hungarian Republic declares its readiness to pay State subsidies on the following conditions:

(a) The Hungarian Republic ensures for five years the payment of State subsidies for the maintenance of church personnel (from June 30, 1948, to December 31, 1953) on the existing basis which is assessed in relation to the scale for civil servants. This figure of State aid for salaries will be reduced as from January 1, 1954, by 25 per cent. and the Government guarantees payment of the remaining 75 per cent. until December 31, 1958. From January 1, 1959, until December 31, 1963, 50 per cent. of the present State subsidy will be paid, then from January 1, 1964, until December 31, 1968, 25 per cent. of it, and on December 31, 1968, all State support will cease.

(b) The Government ensures the yearly payment of 10 per cent. of the existing subsidy for personnel as State support for extraordinary expenses.

(c) The Government of the Hungarian Republic will continue to pay solely for the purposes of the construction, reconstruction and maintenance of church buildings, church halls and parsonages as well as for the furnishing of these structures, the sum assigned for one year of that real subsidy

which was paid by the State for the erection, reconstruction and equipment of the buildings of the Reformed Church between August 1, 1946, and July 31, 1948. This real subsidy will also be reduced according to the above scale after every five-year period, and will cease entirely on December 31, 1968.

(d) Any other State subsidies which have been paid heretofore, will be paid according to the above rules on a decreasing scale.

(e) The State will take over the payment of sums paid out for pensions of members of the National Reformed Pastors' Pensions Institute, as well as those assisting the widows and orphans of these members, on the basis of the scale of civil servants' pensions and will also pay the pensions of those who are retired up till December 31, 1953.

6. Following the plain command of scripture the Hungarian Reformed Church in her Order of Worship will provide for intercessions for the Hungarian Republic, for the Head of the State, for the Government, and for the welfare and peace of the entire Hungarian people, as well as for Divine Service on State holidays, in conformity with the Word of God and the Confessions of the Church. She states that the new Hymnary which is about to be published, contains hymns appropriate to these occasions.

7. The Hungarian Reformed Church takes cognisance of the decision of the Government of the Hungarian Republic to nationalise, by legislation, non-State schools and such residential establishments as are organically connected with them.*

The action of nationalising the Reformed Church Schools will be governed by the following agreement :

(a) The Government will take into State service, as from July 1, 1948, all teaching and other personnel of nationalised schools and attached institutions, duly taking into account their length of service.

(b) The titles to the buildings of nationalised schools and attached institutions, as well as to the glebes assigned to the teachers, will be transferred to the State, together with all liabilities incurred before May 15, 1948, as entered in the land register or otherwise proved. Should disputes arise in connection with claims after considering the proposals of the Joint Commission constituted according to Para. 1, the final decision will rest with the Minister of Religious Affairs and Public Education.

(c) The Government agrees to the arrangement whereby those members of the teaching staff who are serving as Church precentors may continue this work on the existing terms, for two years after the date of this Agreement. That part

* Dormitories.

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of the teacher-precentor's emoluments which is assigned to the precentor for his work as a glebe, will remain in the possession of the Church.

(d) Nationalisation will not affect those institutes of learning which serve exclusively church purposes and which cannot, as such, be regarded as public schools, so that theological colleges, pastors' training institutes, deacons' and deaconesses' schools, missionary training schools and all other schools training church workers will be exempt from nationalisation.

The legal connection which now exists between the Theological Faculty of the University of Debrecen and the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Public Education, will remain unaltered.

(e) The Government of the Hungarian Republic, in order to express its appreciation of the services which the Hungarian Reformed Church has rendered in the sphere of public education, and also to promote the pre-seminary training of a new generation of pastors, agrees that, within limits that do not exceed those now prevailing, the following colleges from among the Reformed Colleges that have the strongest historical traditions will remain church schools:

The Gymnasium,* Lyceum† and Teachers' Training College of the Reformed College in Sárospatak;

the Gymnasium, Lyceum and Teachers' Training College, the Dóczy Girls' Gymnasium, the Dóczy Lyceum and Teachers' College of the Reformed College in Debrecen;

the Gymnasium of the Reformed College in Pápa;

the Lonyay Street Reformed Gymnasium in the IX District of Budapest and, as an integral part of it, the Baár-Madas Reformed Girls' School.

Should the question of enlarging the framework of the aforesaid church-school system arise, the Joint Committee, as constituted according to Para. 1, will make a proposal to the Government.

The Government of the Hungarian Republic will guarantee the maintenance of the aforesaid church schools, during the period of State support, in the same manner as it guarantees the subsidies for personnel specified in para. 5a of the present Agreement. After the expiration of the period of State support, the church will assume their entire maintenance.

(f) The Government of the Hungarian Republic recognises and guarantees the right of the Hungarian Reformed Church

* Secondary school (10-18).

† School for training teachers for elementary schools, for students from 14-20 years. State lyceums have been abolished.

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to continue to exercise freely compulsory religious instruction in State schools, although this question of religious instruction should be regulated afresh in the new Act concerning religious matters, particularly with regard to the members of the free churches and people not belonging to any denomination.*

(g) The personnel of those types of school which will be discontinued will be taken into the State service on the same terms as the personnel of discontinued State schools.

(h) In the event of the Law Academy in Kecskemét being discontinued, the professors now functioning there will be placed by the State in other positions befitting their present status.

(i) The Government of the Hungarian Republic will ensure that in schools in which non-Hungarian speaking (Rumanian, Serbian, Ruthenian, Slovak, German) children are taught, the language of instruction will be the mother-tongue of the children, provided the parents desire it. At the same time, on the basis of reciprocity, the Government of the Hungarian Republic will endeavour to secure the same regulation for the Hungarian speaking youth of the neighbouring States.

8. The Church will modify her school laws according to the new State laws.

9. It will be the task of the Joint Commission, as constituted according to para. 1 of the present Agreement, to make proposals with regard to the regulation of matters still pending.

A similar agreement was made by the Lutheran Church which had had a more serious internal struggle, in which the leading opponent of any collaboration with the new Hungary was Bishop Ordass who was tried and sentenced in November, 1948, for economic offences in connection with money sent to the Lutheran Church from America. It was widely held abroad that this was a case of religious persecution but the evidence would seem to be that the Bishop had to accept the responsibility, legally his, for acts committed in the main by his subordinates.

Catholic Attitude

The Catholic attitude to nationalisation was quite different. Negotiations were begun but broken off, the Cardinal savagely attacked the nationalisation proposals and, having as the result lost all the Catholic schools, excommunicated all those who had made the law and executed it, and threatened to excommunicate any priest, monk or nun who accepted a contract to teach in a State school. The result of this was extremely serious for those religious orders which had depended for their maintenance on the

* Compulsory religious teaching was abolished in 1949 and replaced by religious education in schools at the request of parents.

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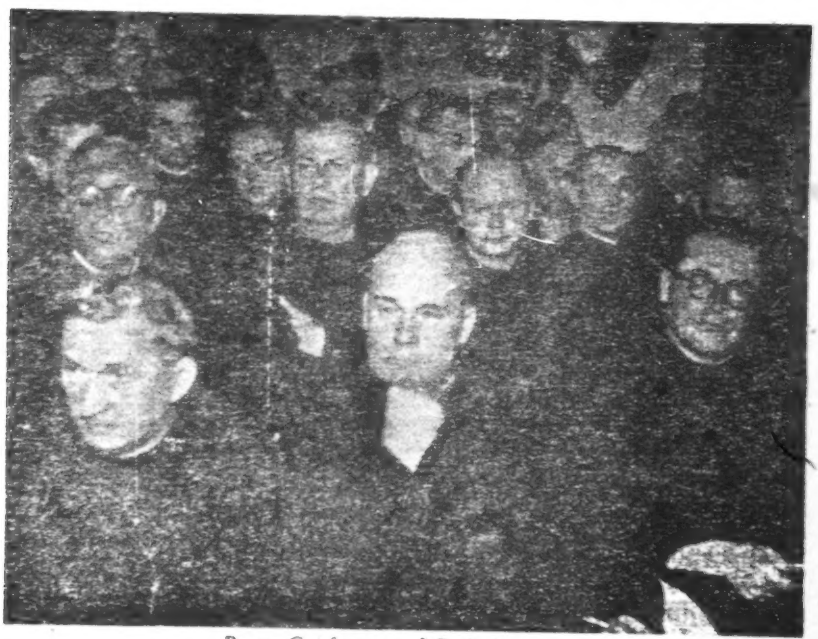
659 teaching salaries of their members and there is no doubt that,
871 left to themselves, they would gladly have accepted the contracts. It is worth adding that the Catholic Church was accepting the usual subsidies from the Government.

794 Then, in December, 1948, events took a new turn when
659 Cardinal Mindszenty and six others were arrested and charged with treason, espionage and currency offences. It is not possible to discuss the trial in detail here (see *The Trial of Cardinal Mindszenty*, by S. G. Evans) except to say that it had nothing to do with the church situation, although, of course, it reacted on the situation by its effect on Catholic opinion. The Hungarian Government had indisputable evidence as to the conspiracy for the reinstatement of the Hapsburg monarchy and the old regime, if necessary by foreign armed intervention and a third world war, and those involved in the conspiracy were brought to trial before an open court at which the world's press was represented.

The charges were amply substantiated, as readers, for example, of *The Times* reports on the trial could see, and the final judgments stretched the law on the side of mercy.

Perhaps the outstanding result of the trial was the revelation to an increasing number of the Catholic clergy as to how badly they had been led and the feelings thus generated burst into the open with a National Congress of Catholic Priests on August 1, 1950. The call to this meeting was widely responded to by parochial clergy, who had long needed an opportunity to express their views on ecclesiastical policy.



Peace Conference of Catholic priests.

659 794 A high percentage of priests had for some time viewed with misgivings the hostile attitude adopted by their leaders to the young People's Republic. They expressed their desire to come to an agreement with the State, and declared openly that they were on the side of peace and for the rebuilding of the country.

[575] As a result the National Committee of Catholic Priests for the Defence of Peace was formed and the Congress also played its part in stimulating the extremely important Church-State Agreement of August 30 which was signed jointly by the Minister of Religion and Public Education and by the Archbishop of Kalocsa on behalf of the Bench of Bishops.

Catholic Agreement

The Government of the Hungarian People's Republic and the Bench of Hungarian Catholic Bishops, desiring to ensure the peaceful co-existence of the State and the Catholic Church and so to promote the unity of the Hungarian people in its work of peaceful reconstruction and to further the peaceful development of our country have, after discussion, come to the following agreement:

I

1. The members of the Bench of Bishops recognise and, in accordance with their duty as citizens, support the State of the Hungarian People's Republic and its Constitution. They declare that according to the rules of the Church they will take proceedings against any ecclesiastical persons who act against the laws of the Hungarian People's Republic and the constructive work of the Government.

2. The Bench of Bishops condemns all kinds of subversive activities directed against the State and the social laws of the Hungarian People's Republic. It announces that it will not permit the exploitation of the religious feelings of the congregations of the Catholic Church for anti-State political purposes.

3. The Bench of Bishops asks the Catholic congregations, as citizens and as patriots, to participate with all their strength in the great work which the whole Hungarian nation is doing under the leadership of the People's Republic, in fulfilling the Five-Year Plan and raising the standard of living for the [423] realisation of social justice. The Bench of Bishops urges the clergy in particular not to resist the development of the agricultural co-operative movement, as such a voluntary co-operation is based upon the moral principle of human solidarity.

794 208 4. The Bench of Bishops supports the peace movement and it approves the efforts of the Hungarian people, and of the Government of the Hungarian People's Republic, to defend peace. It condemns all instigation to war, condemns the use

794 of atomic weapons and therefore considers the Government 208 which first uses the atom bomb as guilty of a crime against humanity.

II

[641] 1. The Government of the Hungarian People's Republic, 659 in accordance with the Constitution of the People's Republic, ensures absolute freedom of religion to the Catholic congregations, and also ensures freedom of activity to the Catholic Church.

[871] 2. The Government of the Hungarian People's Republic approves the return of eight church schools (six boys' schools and two girls' schools) to the Catholic Church and will also see that in all these Catholic schools there are an adequate number of male and female teachers belonging to the religious orders.

3. The Government of the Hungarian People's Republic will provide for the financial needs of the Catholic Church in the spirit already agreed with other religious denominations in such a way that for 18 years, *i.e.*, until the Catholic Church can cover its financial needs from its own resources, it will grant sums decreasing in a proportion every three and five years respectively. Within the framework of the financial aid the Government of the Hungarian People's Republic will lay special stress on ensuring a suitable living wage for the clergy.

To carry out the above agreement a mixed committee shall be formed composed of delegates of the Government of the Hungarian People's Republic and the Bench of Bishops.

Visit to Hungary

A visit to Hungary in the autumn of 1950 provided an opportunity to meet a number of Hungary's church leaders and to get a personal impression of the situation as it is to-day, and it should be said at once that the result was one overall general and inescapable conclusion: that Hungary's church leaders and church people were not perpetually preoccupied with the question of Church-State relations but with making the best provision for dealing with the overwhelming opportunities to do their proper work which were now open to them.

It was typical of the situation that glancing at the local press in the historic Calvinist town of Debrecen there should appear in prominent positions two statements from leaders of the Reformed Church, on this occasion saying that they gladly took part in the local elections because they wanted to support peace and democracy and the abolition of exploitation. Debrecen also has a [563] Jewish paper.

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evangelical magazine *Elö Viz* (Living Water). They are considering the publication of a new monthly magazine for congregational work.

The great need of the moment is for cantors as most of their church cantors were school teachers who abandoned their church singing when they entered the employ of the State. This would seem to indicate that when they were in church employ they did the singing as an act of necessity rather than from free choice. As to politics, all the Lutheran pastors, said the bishop, were in favour of peace but not all work for it, although the bishops have given them a lead. "Christians and Communists," he said, "can work together. The peace movement shows it." As to influences in thinking, Barthianism was still strong although not as strong as among the Reformed. Some think his influence cannot be reconciled to the Augustinian Confession* although the bishop himself regarded this confessionalism as retrograde in the modern situation. Other European influences are Ragaz and Kutter, although their influence is waning and the present situation with its new tasks needed new thought. Naturally pastors were now reading socialist works and a number of articles and lectures and conferences show the effect this has had on their thinking. This was not, nevertheless, regarded as a primary task in the present situation, in which there were so many practical tasks to solve in which theology had a good deal to say, one such being anti-semitism, which was not yet eradicated although the policy of the State was having its effect.

Ordass had been convinced that Western bourgeois democracy was right for Christianity and had been sharply opposed to the socialist direction of the country's policy.‖ He had had a considerable influence in the Lutheran Church but by now the greater part of the pastors could see that the church was developing under the present State and that they are now getting a new relationship with the people. In this matter of Ordass, the Lutheran World Federation had, he thought, been an instrument of American policy. Ordass had eventually been deposed by the Church which had petitioned the Government for his release.

Attending Catholic services, visiting Esztergom, and meeting a number of priests associated with the Catholic Priests' Peace Committee showed a vigorous continuation of the life of the Catholic Church. The symbol of the Catholic Peace Committee, a white cross on a blue ground with a dove at the foot shows a relationship which is far from being inappropriate and which, however long it took to come is now powerfully grounded.† The effect of the Church-State agreement is also symbolised by the buildings at Esztergom where the vast and rather pretentious

* One of the basic documents of Lutheranism.

‖ Bishop Ordass' trial for currency offences is discussed on p. 17.

† By December, 1952, 3,000 of the total of 4,000 priests were members.

346 cathedral built between 1822 and 1869 in imitation of St. Peter's, Rome, dominates the City; the Franciscan buildings had been nationalised, now they are returned to the Church, while the nunnery, on the other hand, has become a State school. The seminary is busy training Catholic priests and the Palace of the Prince Primate is inhabited by nuns, two vicars and church offices although uniformed retainers and cars are still in evidence.

659 The dissolution of certain religious orders was agreed at the 792 time of the Church-State discussions as was the continued existence of the Franciscans, the Benedictines, the Piarists, and the Hungarian Poor Sisters of Our Lady. Monks of dissolved orders have become secular priests while the lay brothers have mainly become school teachers. Each of the remaining orders has two houses, except the Franciscans who have three.

Christians and Peace

[795] More than anything else, perhaps, it is the movement for 794 peace which has paved the way for the co-operation of all the 208 churches in Hungary, not only with the Government but with the 575 Communists. As the movement has developed more and more Christians have come into it. This was abundantly demonstrated in May, 1950, with the beginning of the collection of signatures for the Stockholm Peace Petition. Immediately after this the Reformed Church sent a message to the World Council of Churches pleading with it to take a stand for peace and, at the same time a letter was sent to all its parishes urging the clergy to take part in the peace movement; the Unitarians called on all their ministers to work against war; Catholic priests began to make statements for the Peace Movement, whereas the bishops opposed their participation. In June came the Hungarian Peace Congress with strong Protestant participation and some Catholic. Then came the Cathlic Priests' Peace Conference, already noted, and the Church-State agreement which led the Secretary of the Catholic Priests' Peace Committee, Fr. Richard Horváth, to say:

"This agreement proves that those who initiated the Catholic Priests' Peace Movement were right. The movement has helped in bringing about the agreement and, thus, the long wished-for desire of millions is realised. With this agreement we have made a great step forward in strengthening internal peace.

"We promise to support the Bench of Bishops so that they can fulfil the agreement—which serves the best interests of our people and their spiritual welfare—with the best possible results. We express our thanks to, and our confidence in, the Government for its goodwill and understanding of the interests of the Catholic Church, and towards the workers' loyalty to faith, and respect for traditions. We again declare that we shall continue to do our duty as citizens with enthusiasm and unselfishness."

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Father Richard Horváth.

Both Catholics and Protestants protested to the Security Council against the bombing of civilians in Korea. At the World Peace Congress there were substantial Catholic and Protestant delegations, the Catholic being led by Fr. Horváth and the Protestant by Bishop Péter of Debrecen and Bishop Dezséry of the Lutherans. At the same time the Protestants issued a peace appeal to the Christians of the world; in January the Catholic paper *Uj Ember* (New People) expressed its approval of the Peace Law as did *A Kereszt* (The Cross)* the new weekly paper of the Catholic Priests' Peace Committee and the Lutheran Bishops issued a joint pastoral on Peace.

Recent Developments

Since that time there have been a number of developments of general interest.

In May, 1951, a new law was passed creating a State Office for Church Affairs charged with dealing with all relations between the Churches and the State. No new principle was involved in this measure because the Minister of Education had previously held the responsibility for dealing with such matters. The creation of the new department recognised that the churches were independent and ought not to be confused with questions such as education which were directly the province of the State, and at the same time, by creating a Minister responsible solely for relations between State and Church, it assured that these relations

* Other Catholic periodicals are the bulletin *Magyar-Kurir* (Hungarian Courier) and the monthly *Vigilea*.

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would receive the attention they deserved. The department has since brought the Catholic clergy into the National Insurance scheme and has also facilitated the creation of church co-operative stores for the sale of church literature, vestments and furnishings.

The next development was an unhappy one. The Archbishop of Kalocsa, Jozsef Grösz, who had succeeded Mindszenty in the leadership of the Catholic Church in Hungary, and eight others, were brought to trial, found guilty and sentenced, for continuing the Mindszenty conspiracy. Once again the evidence was overwhelming and the contention of those who had held that Mindszenty and his accomplices had only confessed what they knew the prosecution knew, was abundantly proved when it transpired that Grösz had been entrusted by Mindszenty with the task of continuing his subversive work in the event of his being arrested.

This trial of a second leader of the Catholic Church was obviously a profound shock to the Bench of Bishops and in July, under the presidency of Dr. Czapik, the Archbishop of Eger, they issued unanimously the following statement:

> The Hungarian Bench of Bishops—following the principles of the Catholic faith, and obeying the commands of God, according to which we should be dutiful citizens and respect the laws of the country in which we live, as they do not oblige us to deny the laws of God—make the following statement:—

The Bench of Catholic Bishops ratifies the

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(1) We declare that we recognise the Hungarian State, the Hungarian People's Republic, as our beloved homeland, that we abide by its laws and that we would have others abide by them.

(2) Following the same principle, we condemn every endeavour and every action whatsoever aimed against the People's Republic and its security, which employs violent and unlawful means—no matter by whom it is led. In particular we condemn and stigmatise those ecclesiastics whose criminal activities have been revealed in the last few days.

(3) We declare that we honour our agreement with the Hungarian People's Republic more strictly than ever and that, by virtue of our ecclesiastical laws, we shall take disciplinary action against all those ecclesiastics found guilty of offending against the laws of the Hungarian People's Republic.

We support the endeavours of the Hungarian Government which is defending peace and seeking to protect our homeland against war. Therefore, in accordance with our vocation, we shall foster peace; and in the spirit of our church we approve of the peace movement of Catholic priests. We solemnly appeal to everyone to adopt our statement and to contribute to its implementation.

Agreement with the Hungarian People's Republic.

793 The Bishops took the oath of allegiance to the Republic and
659 also appealed to parishes to offer some of their church lands to
794 the State. On its side the State also took action and on July 3 the Presidential Council passed a decree, to be retrospective in its effects as far back as January 1, 1946, to the effect that Archbishops, Titular Bishops, Bishops, Suffragan Bishops, Abbots-in-Chief, Abbots and Provincials of Monastic Orders could only be appointed on Hungarian territory with the prior assent of the Presidential Council.

659 The rebuilding of churches has continued steadily and, in
794 addition to that, new churches are being built in the entirely new
[361] towns and villages which are the fruit of Hungary's planned
[214] development. Equally striking is the continued growth of church publications and in this field the appearance of the first volumes both of the Old Testament and of the New, of the new translation of the Bible, a new Hungarian-Greek New Testament dictionary, a new Lutheran Psalter and the first translation into Hungarian of Luther's smaller catechism, are outstanding.

The peace movement within the churches grows all the time. The Catholic Priests' Peace Committee, now officially supported by the Bishops, holds ever larger conferences and now has the support of a majority of the churches. The Protestant Churches constitute more and more a challenge to the present direction of Western Christianity in general and the World Council of Churches in particular.

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Bishop Lajos Vetö asks all religious people to work for peace.

Aid to flood victims.

In Hungary, the plains particularly were devastated by extensive floods in recent years. The floods had their origin outside the country and Hungary had no control over preventive measures, as most of the tributaries of the Danube — especially their sources — were on foreign soil after the war. The Succession States neglected the regulation of their flow, and added to this by denuding some of the mountains of their forests which normally absorbed a large part of the rainfall. After winters of unusually high precipitation a greater volume of water than was ever recorded before rushed down to the Hungarian plains.

Voluntary donations helped to relieve, in a small measure, the suffering caused by these disasters, but the expense was largely born by the state. To illustrate the extent of the damage: the Ministry of the Interior alone distributed 20 million pengős among the flood victims; almost 5000 houses had to be rebuilt and 14,000 others repaired by the state. The work of rebuilding was hampered by war-time shortage of material, and supplies had to be controlled centrally.

Employment of returned soldiers.

The men from the farms who were released from the army had to be provided with work. This problem had to be solved by the state after the re-occupation of the northern, north-eastern, Transylvanian and eastern territories, and on a smaller scale after the re-occupation of the southern territories. The year 1940 was a most difficult one in this respect, as during that summer a large proportion of the country's male population was on active

Article 49.

1) The citizens of the Hungarian People's Republic are equal before the law and enjoy equal rights. 642 x 641

2) Discrimination of any kind against any citizen on grounds of sex, religion, or nationality is a severely punishable offence.

3) The Hungarian People's Republic ensures to all nationalities living within its borders the possibility of education in their native tongue and the possibility of developing their national culture.

Article 50.

1) In the Hungarian People's Republic women enjoy equal rights with men. 642 x 562

2) The equal rights of women are implemented by the safeguarding of their working conditions on a par with those of men, maternity leave with pay in the event of pregnancy, increased legal protection of mother and child, and a system of maternity and child welfare institutions.

Article 51.

The Hungarian People's Republic protects the institution of marriage and the family. 642 x 594

Article 52.

The Hungarian People's Republic devotes special care to the education and development of the young and accords them special protection. 642 x 855

Article 53.

The Hungarian People's Republic effectively supports all scientific work serving the cause of the working people, as well as the arts which depict the life and struggle of the people and proclaim the victory of the people. It gives every support to the emergence of intellectual workers faithful to the people. 642 x 815 517

Article 54.

1) The Hungarian People's Republic safeguards the liberty of conscience of all citizens and the freedom of religious worship. 642 x 641

2) In order to ensure the liberty of conscience, the Hungarian People's Republic separates the Church from the State. 642 x 659

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204 Propoganda and press are closely interwoven in present
208 day Hungary, exerting an ever-increasing political pressure on all phases of post-war reconstruction.

State Versus Religion

659 Until recently both Soviet occupational authorities and the Hungarian Communists have avoided restricting by legislation the country's religious liberty. On the contrary, in order to disarm criticism by religious groups, the coalition government introduced legal measures to restore "the rights of individual communities belonging to accepted and recognized religions which were abolished by earlier Fascist regulations."[34] There has been a definite increase of popular attachment to the Roman Catholic Church which has retained its strong
793 influence on public opinion. The present Catholic leader of Hungary,
659 Joseph Cardinal Mindszenty, is very outspoken on moral and national matters and has taken a definite stand on contemporary issues. During the war he protested on several occasions against particular actions of the German and Hungarian Fascists.[35] As Bishop of Veszprém he was repeatedly mistreated by gangs of the Fascist Arrow Cross followers. He severely criticized the land reform which deprived the Church of over half a million acres by limiting all ecclesiastical holdings to less than one hundred acres each. More recently in a letter addressed to the Minister of Justice he complained about the mistreatment of war criminals. As a Catholic leader he continually emphasized his anti-Communist sentiments and his disapproval of the methods and severity of Soviet occupation.

793 Some of Cardinal Mindszenty's close followers recently submitted
661 a plan which would put Hungary's reconstruction on a broader and more democratic basis. This project entails a four-power supervision of the Hungarian Army and police force after the withdrawal of Soviet

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34 Decree 6270/1946 M.E., published June 4, 1946, H.G. 125.

35 In June, 1944, in a joint pastoral circular letter with the then Cardinal Justinian Serédi he stated that: "Precisely now, because we are in this dreadful world war, we are in the greatest need of the help of God. . . . In these very times we see with unutterable sadness that here, in Christian Hungary, successive orders were decreed which are opposed to the laws of God. These edicts have infringed upon, and even totally taken away the inborn rights of a part of our Hungarian fellow-citizens . . . and they are persecuted exclusively on account of their racial origin, without proving their individual crimes, if any, and without the procedure prescribed by law. You also could readily understand the injustice of such action, if you were deprived of your rights in this manner." This pastoral letter was ordered read in every Catholic church in the country. It has recently been reprinted in its full text, in English, as part of a documentary collection of Catholic speeches and statements, *Important Declarations of J. Serédi, Taken From his Pastoral Letters and Speeches Which Refer to Actual Ecclesiastico-Political Questions* (Budapest, 1946), pp. 28-37.

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troops from Hungary. The supervision outlined by the planners would be integrated and general rather than of a zonal character. It is aimed at the armed and police forces of Hungary which are under strict Communist party control at present. Mindszenty's followers also contend that a majority of the people would oppose Communist control with force and that the recent ill-starred plot in Hungary was a mere foretaste of what might come. These members of the small Liberty party and of the formerly dominant Smallholders appealed to London and Washington in the hope of getting "one last opportunity of preventing the establishment of a completely Communist dictatorship in Hungary."[36]

In the past year relations between the Church and State deteriorated rapidly until the Church now stands in open opposition to the government. Catholic youth organizations and many of the parochial schools which constitute sixty percent of all educational institutions were accused of "reactionary and fascist" activities and subsequently closed. Several outstanding Catholic leaders were jailed along with members of the Smallholders majority, and recently determined attempts were made to prevent Cardinal Mindszenty's departure for Rome. Even the relatively free intellectual atmosphere of Budapest has suffered under the impact of these restrictive measures which have created a serious rift between the country's political rulers and its largely Catholic public opinion. Prophetic indeed are the words of a Catholic writer, Jenö Katona: "Hungarian Catholicism is undergoing its most severe historical crisis, its most profound social and political transformation in many centuries. The Church had two fundamental problems, its feudal wealth based on land holdings and its dependence on the secular power of the State. . . . The entire social structure rooted in land-monopoly has now been blasted by outside forces. After the present conflict subsides the Hungarian Catholic Church will emerge as a new social-minded church, not the representative of a feudal agrarian-capitalism."[37] In the meantime the Church stands *for* connections with Rome and the Western world, *against* Communism and the spread of Soviet domination.

The Economic Reconstruction

A drastic land reform was undoubtedly the most significant step

36 Cf. C. L. Sulzberger, "Hungarians Hope to Avert Red Coup by 4-Power Rule," *The New York Times*, Feb. 16. 1947.

37 Cf. Jenö Katona, "Katolicizmus és politika," "*Valóslag*, March-May, 1946, Vol. II, Nos. 3-5, pp. 42-46. (Translation mine.)

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651 to meet the levies. When a farmer succeeded in doing so, he
423 found that he was forced to sell his surplus at prices fixed by the government; and these were so low that he was unable to make both ends meet and was forced into bankruptcy. Foreclosures became the rule.

•659 By the close of 1948, the Catholic Church in Hungary had
794 lost its wealth and material independence. To its other losses of this character must be added the elimination of revenues from the system of advowson, an economic survival from the Middle Ages. This arrangement made it legally incumbent upon stipulated wealthy patrons, and upon cities and towns, abbeys and foundations, to contribute to the support of the Church. Budapest, for example, was partly responsible for
[423] the upkeep of parishes within its boundaries. The 1945 Land Reform Law abolished all rich patrons as a matter of course; but cities and towns kept up the practice of advowson, often with ironical results. Thus in Budapest the patronage committee of the City Council, whose members traditionally had been clerical, very soon took on a Communist hue. This was, however, the committee entrusted under the law with reviewing the list of priests nominated by the Archbishop for appointment to pastorates. The responsibility, therefore, was now transferred to the Communist Party. It took persistent delight in vetoing all nominations of persons it looked upon with disfavor. Slowly, such committees also withdrew financial support. All that then remained to the Church were direct subsidies from the State, so that a relationship of complete financial dependence was established.

659 Meanwhile the fate of religious education was likewise being debated. Prior to 1948 Communist efforts to ban instruction in the tenets of the recognized faiths met with so much resistance that the traditional practices—namely, compulsory religion classes in the public schools and the maintenance of

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private schools under Catholic, Protestant, or Jewish auspices 659 ●
—were continued. But after the seizure of power the Minister of Education, Julius Ortutay, presented a four-point program dealing with religious influence in the training of youth. The principal provision was that the private educational system was to be nationalized, though a relatively small number of institutions were suffered to remain under the aegis of Church and Synagogue. Elementary schooling was the main target, but the secondary schools also were grievously affected. The government took over nearly three thousand Catholic grammar schools, and more than a thousand that had been under Calvinist supervision. Church authorities opposed these actions resolutely, but the Ortutay program was adopted by vote of Parliament on June 16, 1948. Therewith Communism won the first round in the struggle for the mind of youth. The advantage was exploited with measures designed to curb and suppress religiously motivated organizations, to curtail the freedom of the press, and to subject to rigorous censorship all that was said in the name of the Church. The charitable institutions, too, were nationalized. Hospitals, orphanages, homes for the aged, nurseries—all became the property of the government, which went on to demand that spokesmen for religion sing the praises of the "People's Democratic State."

As usual, a State Office for Ecclesiastical Affairs was established, with full responsibility for regulating the endeavors of the Churches. These sought to mitigate their impoverishment by voluntary contributions from the faithful, and their appeal met with a heartening response during the early years after the war; but inflation, the confiscation and nationalization of private property, and the imposition of crushing taxes on the peasantry so drained the resources of the faithful that only a few religious orders and the higher clergy could carry on with what was voluntarily given. It should also be noted that

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G59 794 libraries, art treasures, and furnishings belonging to the Churches were nationalized by a decree of November 16, 1948, so that none of these could be sold. The Constitution of the People's Democracy, which had been ratified on August 20, proclaimed the separation of Church and State. This meant not only that all the ancient privileges of the Catholic Church were abrogated (for example, the Archbishop of Esztergom had been a member of the Regent's Council), but that in all truth two hostile powers had been established in Hungary: atheistic Communism, able to rely on the full might of the civil authority; and organized religion, able to exist only if it were subsidized by the State and if it remained content not to resist any propagandistic attack to which it was subjected. The sole unanswered question was whether under such conditions the Churches could survive and maintain their integrity. The prostitution of the intellectual had been woeful enough, as everyone knows who has studied the history of professors and clergymen cowed by Hitler. Would spokesmen for Christ now become the docile puppets of a ruthless and irreligious regime?

793 687 In a setting thus compounded of frustration and terror there emerged Joseph, Cardinal Mindszenty, and the drama of his opposition and torment, surely the most moving and widely known episode in the Catholic resistance to Communism. It has, however, perhaps not always been understood. When his name first drew notice outside his own country it was besmirched with the propaganda which laid low so much of the world, in that hour grim in its repudiation of Nazism and unwilling to face the dire possibility that Stalinism might conceivably prove to be still more mighty and no less evil. The Cardinal was widely reputed to be a reactionary busybody, a zealous friend and supporter of the Magyars (all of them of course disreputable), a devotee of Hitler, an arch-clerical

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793 priest. Under the influence of a mother whose memory he
159 would cherish and honor in a book, he proved himself a studious lad. Eventually he prepared for the priesthood, was ordained, and quickly earned a wide reputation as one who combined an ardent concern for the spiritual welfare of his people with a quite personal interest in their earthly well-being. The times through which he had lived as a boy and as a priest were stormy, but he weathered them. He was made an Archbishop of Esztergom and Prince Primate of Hungary on October 2, 1945.

793 A catalogue of the events which tried the soul of this spirited
659 and zealous Prince of the Church would be a lengthy one, indeed. First there appeared, as might have been anticipated, a Communist-inspired "National Church" entrusted with persuading Catholics to sever their ties with Rome and the Vatican. The priests who served this "Church" were a fairly queer lot, who made their first collective public appearance after the Cardinal delivered, on January 20, 1946, an address in honor of St. Margaret, one of the patrons of Hungary. He said in his usual forthright way:

> After a year of bitter suffering, Hungary finally saw the Tartars depart. They did not leave lightheartedly, for they had never enjoyed so much freedom or enjoyed so pleasant a life. Their experiences in Caracorum had been far more trying. There, in accordance with a rule laid down by Genghis Khan, they could neither bathe nor change their clothes. But they went back, because the Great Khan had died. . . . History teaches us that all things on this earth are transitory, even as were the achievements of Genghis Khan, Napoleon and Hitler. Through such men God sends the scourge of many sufferings to the world. When the bony hand of death touches such men, the peoples and the nations breathe once more.

These remarks alluded to St. Margaret's time, but their application to the Russian masters of Hungary was obvious. The

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Communists staged a mammoth parade through the streets of Budapest, demanding the Cardinal's head. The priests of the "National Church" marched in the procession.

There followed the discovery of a series of alleged conspiracies against the government and the Red Army, each attributed to the instigation of the Cardinal. Both he and his fellow churchmen were kept busy issuing denials. The major import of the charges was that Catholic schools under the tutelage of the religious orders were responsible for the widespread sabotage of the regime. Among the discoverers of plots were divers alumni of such schools who for a variety of reasons, primarily no doubt financial, found it expedient to collaborate with the Communists, even as some of them had previously fished in Nazi waters. On May 20, 1946, Cardinal Mindszenty issued a Pastoral Letter in defense of Catholic and, more generally, of religious education. It was a very frank message, which contained such patently challenging statements as this: "There are some who like to describe the Church as a 'hotbed of reaction.' But those who consider everything Catholic reactionary ought really to look for reaction in places where all liberty is suppressed."

In order to account adequately for the complete candor of such remarks, one must bear in mind that the peace treaty with Hungary was not signed until 1947. It was therefore still possible to hope that the Western Powers would maintain their missions in the country and take steps to insure a modicum of freedom. Unfortunately they would not do so. Meanwhile the Cardinal, who was always a Hungarian patriot, had appealed to the ranking Catholic prelates of the United States and Great Britain for assistance in preventing the expulsion of Hungarian minorities from Czechoslovakia. These unfortunate people were driven out under conditions comparable to those which had attended the casting out of the Sudeten

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793 Germans. Later he denounced quite as vigorously the expulsion of German-speaking minority groups from Hungary. However, as soon as the treaty went into effect, the Cardinal and the Church were left to face the enemy unaided. It had been argued that he should have anticipated the development and adopted a more conciliatory tone; but the evidence garnered in other satellite countries shows that he would merely have made his own lot easier without changing in the least the direction in which the Communist Party was implacably moving.

659 798 795 The first effect of the treaty on religious activities was the subjugation of the Calvinist and Lutheran churches. Lutheran ranks had been seriously depleted by the expulsion of German "ethnic" groups. During the autumn of 1948 Bishop Lajos Ordass, undoubtedly the ablest and most courageous Lutheran leader, was brought to trial and sentenced to two years in prison. The Calvinists, on the other hand, were led intellectually by Dr. Albert Bereczky, who seemingly assented to every demand made by the State. Soon this Hungarian Protestant church heard Bishop Imre Ravecz say that "the most important and significant ordinances of the Hungarian form of society are in complete accord with Holy Writ." These developments were interpreted in some quarters as meaning that whereas the Protestant churches enjoyed complete freedom under Communist rule, the recalcitrant Catholic Church was having a difficult time because of the bigotry and lust for power which characterized its Hierarchy.

795 578 771 As a matter of fact, the Calvinist Church in particular was feeling the knout, not merely in outward persecution but also in inner conflict. Prior to the signing of the treaty and the Communist seizure of the government the dominant group in it was the one that had opposed the Nazis. These men, notably Bereczky, were persuaded that the traditional interdependence

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of Church and State had been evil, and that only separation could advance the cause of the Gospel. The coming of the Communists was interpreted as being in part a punishment visited upon the Church for sin. Drastic reform was therefore needed, and above all missionary effort to bring the masses to a realization of the true meaning of Christian teaching. Yet at the same time the gifted and realistic Bishop László Ravasz pointed out firmly that freedom was possible to the Church only if society recognized the value of freedom and insisted that religious education was a duty no parent could shirk if he hoped to remain a Christian. An ultimatum by the government to the Church, presented during the early months of 1948, resulted in the resignation of Bishop Ravasz as President of the General Synod and as a member of the Hierarchy. The Synod protested against this high-handed action, but in the end Bereczky gained the position of greatest prominence in the Church.

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Passing over, for the moment, the situation thus created, we resume the chronicle of the Cardinal. Every new day brought disappointments. The government laid its heavy hand on the schools, the press, and Catholic Action. It induced a group of Catholics, in the name of progress, to promulgate criticism of the Primate. Outwardly it was still possible to pretend that Church and State were seeking agreement. Monsignor Zsigmond Mihalovics, director of Catholic Action in Hungary and later an exile, relates in *Mindszenty, Ungarn, Europa* that he went with a companion to attend a reception in honor of the President of the Republic late in 1947, only to find that Mátyás Rákosi, Secretary-General of the Hungarian Communist Party, was anxious to chat and have his picture taken in the company of Church dignitaries. The Party was still interested in camouflage and, as usual, was proficient in the art.

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Events moved swiftly towards a climax during the summer

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but the end was bound to be failure, unless, indeed, a miracle 793
occurred. We may well believe that the Cardinal hoped in those days for such a marvel—not one which would summon down a legion of angels from Heaven, but one based on the impact of a united Catholic people, if not on the consciences, then at least on the political calculations of their rulers. But the Russians now entered the scene and grimly ordered the liquidation of the Cardinal.

To be sure, nothing was done precipitously. On January 10, 793
1948, Rákosi spoke for the Communist Party. He declared 659
that nothing could be more desirable than an agreement between Church and State, but that the conduct and attitude of the Church made it impossible. That had, he said, become the cloak under which reaction plied its subversive trade. Its leaders were openly hostile to the new order. They had repudiated the noble traditions of 1848 by organizing a rival observance. They were opposed to land reform, to the Three Year Plan, and to peace. On February 15, Cardinal Mindszenty addressed an assembly at St. Stephen's Academy in Budapest, citing a number of Papal Encyclicals on peace to make the Church's position clear.* However, some of the quotations made could be easily interpreted as comments on the mentality and methods of the Communist Party. They were so understood. The Ministry of the Interior forbade the publication of the text of this address. Measures were taken in rapid succession to curb the Catholic press, to undermine Catholic charities, and to prepare the way for the transfer of all schools to the State.

Then occurred what is usually known as the tragedy of 659
Pocspetri. On June 1 the pastor of this little town of 2,000 793
souls in eastern Hungary, acting on a request from the As- 661

* Texts of this and other addresses are conveniently assembled in *Cardinal Mindszenty Speaks: Authorized White Book* (New York, 1949).

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659 sociation of Teachers, called the parents of his congregation
793 together to vote on whether the schools should be removed
661 from the jurisdiction of the Church. Two pads of paper were placed on the table, one for affirmative and the other for negative votes. All four hundred parents voted No. Two days later, the village council met to consider the same question. Rumors coursed through the town to the effect that the vote cast by the parents was to be nullified, and quickly an excited crowd gathered round the town hall, demanding that the will of the people be respected. The police were sent for, and they ordered the crowd to disperse. One officer drew his revolver and threatened to shoot. Thereupon a citizen named Kiralyfalvi entered the fray; there was a scuffle, and the policeman lay dead.

793 The pastor, Father Aszalos, seems not to have been present
637 when the shooting occurred. Nevertheless he became the central figure in a highly theatrical trial designed to prove that he and the "reactionary Hierarchy" were responsible for the incident. First the poor priest was taken, together with Kiralyfalvi and other villagers to the notorious prison maintained by the secret police at Andrássy ut 60, Budapest. The trial was then conducted without benefit of defense counsel. To the great surprise of nearly everyone—including, it is said, the officials of the Ministry of the Interior—Father Aszalos pleaded guilty. Indeed he went on to say that the real culprits were his religious superiors, who were always stirring up opposition to the government. Left to himself, he added, he would never have argued against the secularization of education. Nevertheless he was guilty because he had failed to heed his own conscience. The sentence of death imposed by the court was changed later to life imprisonment.

659 The observance of the Holy Year continued, despite stead-
796 ily mounting obstacles, into the summer of 1948. It had be-

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come necessary to secure the approval of the government for each pilgrimage, and most gatherings were surrounded by cordons of police. On June 13 many tens of thousands gathered in Budapest to participate in devotions honoring Our Lady of Fatima. Someone called for a cheer in honor of the absent Cardinal. The crowd responded. Police cars thereupon appeared, and the throng was attacked and dispersed. Many persons were arrested; some were deported to labor camps. This pattern was followed thenceforth, so that the year of devotion petered out in fear, dispersal, and helplessness. It was obvious that the Communists had been neither impressed nor cowed.

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Cardinal Mindszenty had every reason to suppose that action would soon be taken against him. On November 18 he issued his last Pastoral Letter, defending the celebrations in honor of the Blessed Virgin and making a profession of faith. It stated:

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> Two of my predecessors were killed in action, two were robbed of all their possessions, one was taken prisoner and deported, one was assassinated. The greatest of them all went into exile. Karoly Ambrus visited and nursed the plague-stricken and himself died of their disease.
>
> Of all my predecessors, however, none was as devoid of all means as I am. So systematic and so adroit a net of propaganda untruths—lies disproved a hundred times and yet repeated a hundred times—was never spun round any of my seventy-eight precursors in office. I stand for God, the Church, and Hungary. This responsibility has been placed on me as a result of the fate which has been meted out to our nation, standing now alone, an orphan in the world. When what happens to me is compared with the sufferings of my people, it is seen to be of trifling consequence.

A brave man, sometimes impetuous but always zealously mindful of duty and of love, was going by reason of the might of evil into his own Gethsemane.

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a convict devoid of honor or name, uncertain even whether 793
he was looked upon throughout the world as a man who had 687
betrayed his trust. No one could tell him that in his worst hour simple people were praying that the Lord God might have mercy on him—praying throughout Hungary, which he may have loved too well even as some other men love their wives unduly. The world into which he went from his trial was a world without prayer or peace. God had departed from it. One cannot avoid saying that. It was become a world in which endless shifts of prisoners move out of the gray dawn into the even grayer dusk, and it was necessary that it have in its midst a man stripped naked. It needed Job in the red hat of a Cardinal.*

After the condemnation of its most resourceful and courageous Christian leader, Hungary could no longer muster anyone to lead the resistance. During August, 1950, the Catholic Bishops signed an agreement with the government similar in every significant respect to that which the Bishops of Czechoslovakia had signed. Despite it Cardinal Mindszenty's successor was arrested and haled before a court. A "Peace Movement" was formed among the clergy; and though at first only a few elected to join it, these gave it enthusiastic support. On October 23, 1951, for example, the Budapest Radio announced that a meeting of the "reconstituted Board" of the movement had been held, at which Bishop Beresztocsky, the

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* The fate of the Cardinal in imprisonment has been described by eyewitnesses who may be assumed to be reliable. Congenital frailty, and not mistreatment in prison, is responsible for his poor health. He has been permitted to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, although in complete isolation. Two visits from his mother have been permitted, and he has seen the Archbishop of Eger and the Bishop entrusted with the care of Catholics according to the Greek rite. Hungarian sources indicate that he has not been deported but is at Hüvösvölgy Prison in Budapest. There is no information as to views which the Cardinal may have expressed to his visitors, but all sources agree that he has been treated without undue harshness, and that the principal rigors of prison life are self-imposed.

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chairman, reviewed the progress of the peace movement throughout the world, and lauded Stalin as the foremost enemy of war. Meanwhile the clergy of Hungary had also been called upon to sign an oath of allegiance to the Constitution. The great majority of priests complied during January, 1950, making the usual reservation that they pledged themselves to nothing that was antithetical to the Catholic faith.

Archbishop Jozsef Grőcz, successor to the Cardinal, attempted as best he could to guide the ship of the Church through the waters of persecution. Nevertheless during the summer of 1951 he and several other members of the Hierarchy—Bishops Andreas Hamvas, Joseph Petery, and Luigi Shvoy—were arrested. The subsequent trial, in which a number of less prominent clergymen also were the accused, offered a new version of the ordeal of the Cardinal. No doubt the major reason for this spectacle was the declaration of the Bishops that any service they rendered to the cause of "peace" was of a moral and religious character only, with no political significance. Archbishop Grőcz was sentenced to imprisonment on June 28, and a new series of assaults upon the Church ensued. A few days later, the remnant of the Hierarchy signed a profession of loyalty to the government. This in turn decreed that no one could validly hold office as a bishop, abbot, or provincial unless the State had approved his appointment. Indeed, even those who had assumed their offices after January, 1946, were declared subject to the same regulation. Religious orders were dissolved, and priests who had incurred excommunication by membership in the "Peace Movement" were appointed to important pastorates. Many priests and monks were deported to slave-labor camps. Under the pressure thus exerted, the bishops who still had freedom and the Abbot of Hungary's largest monastery took the oath of allegiance. Some of them even went

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inal assumption—namely, that every Christian will realize that Stalinism is incompatible with Christianity—to be false. At any rate, in a private letter to Bereczky dated September 16, 1951, he wrote, "It seems to me that you are on the way toward making your affirmation of Communism a part of the Christian message." This would, of course, be the same error of which the German Christian Movement had been guilty under Hitler.

At any rate, the Protestant Churches in their turn were compelled to negotiate an agreement with the government, accepting the whole of the Communist program dealing with finances, education, and the appointment of clergymen and other Church dignitaries. When Bishop Ravasz resigned in protest, the Calvinist Synod attempted to elect a worthy man to be his successor. The government refused to endorse the choice, and finally succeeded in gaining acceptance for Pastor Roland Kiss, well known as friendly to the Communist position. Only a few indications of the extent to which infamy and outrage prevailed thereafter can be adduced here. The grossest kind of interference in the work of the pastorate was resorted to, so that in the end notorious and criminal Communists were installed in ecclesiastical offices, while worthy churchmen were dismissed, deported, and imprisoned. Only eight Church schools survived the drive for the nationalization of education. Relief and welfare organizations were forbidden; and the press was reduced to impotence by censorship and suppression. Toward the close of 1951, two theological seminaries were closed. Even more dire, if that be possible, was the fate of the small Lutheran minority. Its leaders were hounded, ousted from office and imprisoned.

By the close of 1951, civil and religious liberties were extinguished in Hungary to an extent which the Cardinal himself could hardly have foreseen. Virtually everyone who had oc-